THE PLANET MOORD, THE FAR FUTURE.
"AS A YOUTH, I AM IRON LAD, THE TIME-TRAVELING FOUNDER OF THE YOUNG AVENGERS.
"AS AN ADULT, I AM KANG THE CONQUEROR, THE TIME-TRAVELING ENEMY OF THE AVENGERS.
"AS A TIME-TRAVELER, I AM FOREVER AT WAR WITH MYSELF--FOREVER ATTEMPTING TO FULFILL MY DESTINY--AND FOREVER ATTEMPTING TO CHANGE IT...
"...AND RIGHT NOW THE CONFLICT IS KILLING ME."
I WILL NEVER GROW UP TO BECOME YOU, KANG...
...AND I WILL SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE REVERSING YOUR CONQUESTS, LIBERATING THOSE YOU'VE ENSLAVED, AND ERASING EVERY ITERATION OF YOU FROM THE TIMESTREAM.
BUT YOU'VE ALREADY BECOME ME, NATHANIEL.
EVERY MOMENT YOU SPEND IN THE TIMESTREAM--EVERY MOMENT OF OUR SHARED HISTORY THAT YOU ALTER--BRINGS YOU ONE STEP CLOSER TO BECOMING KANG THE CONQUEROR.
THEN, IF THIS IS MY FINAL MISSION...
...IT IS GOING TO BE YOURS, AS WELL.
I'M AFRAID WE CAN'T ALLOW THAT, IRON LAD.

...KANG THE CONQUEROR IS AN AVENGER...
YOU OKAY, SWEETIE?
THE ARMOR ABSORBED MOST OF IT. ARE YOU OKAY?
...AND YOU'RE A COUPLE?
WHY ARE YOU SURPRISED? HE IS YOU, AFTER ALL.
THAT WAS AGES AGO. AND THE VISION'S...A MACHINE.
BUT... WHAT ABOUT YOU AND THE VISION?
YES, BUT HE HAS FEELINGS, CASSIE.
NOT ANYMORE, IRON LAD.
WHEN MY EMOTIONAL LIFE PROVED TO BE MORE A LIABILITY THAN AN ASSET, I DISABLED IT.
I HEAR YA.
SINCE WHEN DO YOU HAVE FEELINGS?
SINCE THE DOC SAID WE'RE HAVING TWINS. AND THOSE FEELINGS ARE TERROR AND NAUSEA. ALSO A LITTLE ACID REFLUX.
YOU'RE PREGNANT?
TECHNICALLY, KATE'S PREGNANT, BUT--
BUT TOM'S THE ONE WITH THE MOOD SWINGS.
AND THE CRAVINGS.
WHEN DID ALL THIS HAPPEN?
AND WHERE'S BILLY? WHERE ARE THE AVENGERS? THE OTHER AVENGERS? THE REAL AVENGERS?
THEY'RE SEARCHING THE TIMESTREAM FOR US...
...AND THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL WE'RE DEAD.

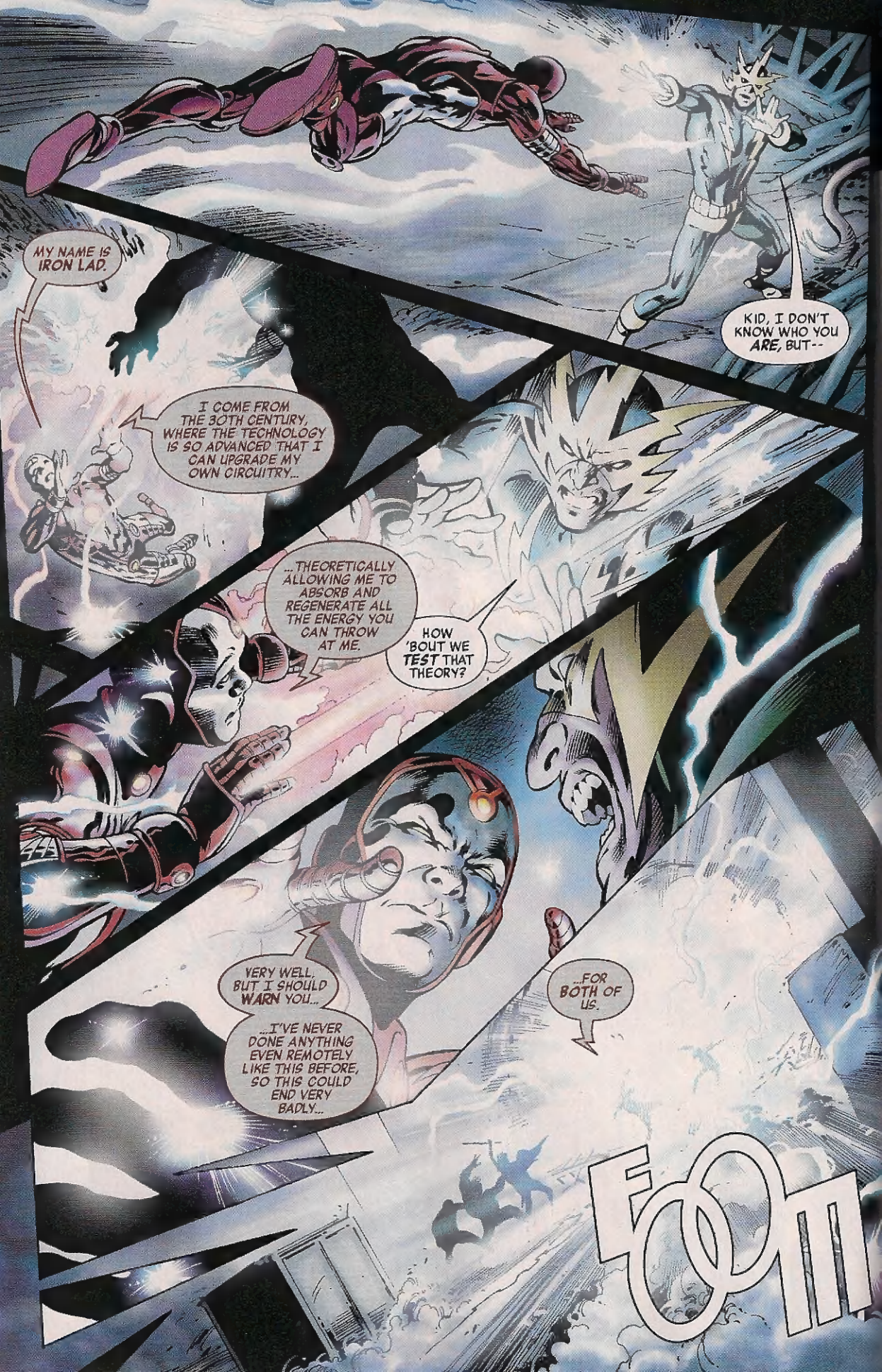
AVENGERS MANSION, SUB-BASEMENT, THE PAST.
THEN WHY ARE WE WASTING TIME FIGHTING HOLOGRAMS OF SPIDER-MAN'S ROGUES GALLERY?
THEY'RE NOT HOLOGRAMS. THEY'RE VIRTUAL REALITY CONSTRUCTS.
WHICH MEANS, YOU CAN TOUCH THEM--THEY CAN TOUCH YOU--AND MOST IMPORTANTLY...
ZZZT
OW!
THAT HURT!
...THEY CAN HURT YOU.
IT DID. WHICH HURT.
I PROGRAMMED IT TO STING.
WHICH IS HOPEFULLY HOW WE'LL LEARN.
THEN I GUESS YOU'RE ABOUT TO LEARN TO WATCH YOUR BACK.

THEN, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE FINALLY GOING OUT ON PATROL--
WE DON'T HAVE TO. HE'S HERE! IT'S...
...KANG.
IRON LAD!
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
IT'S OKAY-- YOU'RE OKAY-- HE'S NOT REAL. HE'S JUST PART OF THE VR PROGRAM.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. KANG ISN'T ONE OF THE SINISTER SIX.
BUT WE'VE ONLY FOUGHT FIVE OF THEM, WHICH MEANS, THIS ISN'T KANG...
...IT'S MYSTERIO.
THAT'S AMAZING, NATHANIEL...
...YOU CREATED A PROGRAM SO SOPHISTICATED, IT EVEN FOOLED YOU.

WHICH, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, WAS MEANT AS A COMPLIMENT. YOU OKAY?
APPARENTLY NOT.
I TOOK ONE LOOK AT KANG AND I FROZE.
I COULDN'T EVEN DEFEND MYSELF, LET ALONE TRY TO DEFEAT HIM.
NATHANIEL, THAT'S WHAT TRAINING SESSIONS ARE FOR. YOU SAID SO YOURSELF.
YES, BUT CLEARLY I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO NEEDS TRAINING.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
AND MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. MAYBE WE SHOULD STAY IN AND TRAIN TONIGHT--
NO...
...YOU GUYS GO. HAVE YOUR DATE NIGHT. YOU'VE EARNED IT.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I'LL RUN THE SIM-SESSION AGAIN.
BY YOURSELF?
ON A SATURDAY NIGHT?
WHY SHOULD SATURDAY NIGHT BE ANY DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER NIGHT?
YOU'RE HERE ALL ALONE EVERY NIGHT?
OF COURSE...

"THAT THIS IS A JOB FOR... WHATEVER WE'RE GOING TO CALL OURSELVES."
YOU GOT YOUR WISH, ELI. WE'RE OUT ON PATROL.
MEANWHILE, THE GIRL OF MY DREAMS IS BACK AT THE RESTAURANT.
YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY: "BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR..."
IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR US TO TURN AROUND AND GO...
...BACK.
I THINK, ONCE YOU FIND THE DEAD BODY, IT IS OFFICIALLY TOO LATE TO GO BACK.
LOOKS LIKE HE WAS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.
OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE...
...AND THAT'S NOT LIGHTNING.
WHAT DO WE DO?
CALL THE COPS?
WE SUIT UP.
ELI, AT LEAST SIX PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BURNED BEYOND RECOGNITION--
YOU THINK THE COPS CAN HANDLE THAT?
THIS IS SUPER HERO TERRITORY.
DO YOU KNOW ANY?
NOPE.
IT'S UP TO US...

ARE WE REALLY DOING THIS?
WE'VE ALREADY DONE THIS. WE TOOK DOWN THE WHOLE SIMULATED SINISTER SIX, REMEMBER?
WHAT THE HELL..?
WE'LL BE FINE AS LONG AS WE ALL STICK TO THE TRAINING PROTOCOLS.
WE'LL BE FINE, BECAUSE, AS OF THIS MOMENT, GENTLEMEN, WE ARE OFFICIALLY SUPER--
AAGGH!
ZZT
ZZT
UHHN!
TEDDY!!!
ZZT


MY NAME IS IRON LAD.
I COME FROM THE 30TH CENTURY, WHERE THE TECHNOLOGY IS SO ADVANCED THAT I CAN UPGRADE MY OWN CIRCUITRY...
...THEORETICALLY ALLOWING ME TO ABSORB AND REGENERATE ALL THE ENERGY YOU CAN THROW AT ME.
HOW 'BOUT WE TEST THAT THEORY?
KID, I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT--
VERY WELL, BUT I SHOULD WARN YOU...
...I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING EVEN REMOTELY LIKE THIS BEFORE, SO THIS COULD END VERY BADLY...
...FOR BOTH OF US.
FOOM

WELL, THAT WENT BETTER THAN I EXPECTED.
I THINK SOMEBODY JUST GRADUATED FROM AVENGERS ACADEMY.
YOU JUST TOOK OUT ELECTRO ALL BY YOURSELF.
WHICH AUTOMATICALLY ELEVATES YOU TO AT LEAST SPIDER-MAN LEVEL ON THE SUPER SCALE.
SPIDER-MAN LEVEL? YOU THINK?
DID I SAY SPIDER-MAN? I MEANT SPIDER-GIRL.
I WAS KIDDING.
I DON'T FEEL VERY WELL.
NATHANIEL?
GUYS, WE HAVE TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE.
YOU BOYS GO...

NATHANIEL...?
IS HE ALIVE?
ANYBODY KNOW C.P.R.?
HE'S NOT BREATHING.
IT WAS THE ONLY USEFUL THING I EVER LEARNED IN GYM CLASS.
AND IT ALLOWED ME AND JIMMY STIDHAM TO MAKE OUT IN FRONT OF THE ENTIRE CLASS.
WHO'S JIMMY STIDHAM?
DO YOU MIND? I'M TRYING TO SAVE A LIFE, HERE.
=KOFF=
DID HE JUST COUGH?
YES, HE DID.
IN MY MOUTH.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
I DIDN'T SAY I DIDN'T ENJOY IT.
EASY, TIGER.
HEY, IT WOULDN'T BE DATE NIGHT IF NOBODY GOT KISSED.
NATE? YOU WITH US?

WE CAME TOGETHER TO FIGHT KANG THE CONQUEROR...
...BUT WHEN WE REALIZED THAT OUR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY WAS THE SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF OTHERS, WE BECAME YOUNG AVENGERS.
AND ELECTRO GOT AWAY AND HELPED OVER FORTY SUPER-CRIMINALS ESCAPE FROM A MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON.
THEY TERRORIZED THE CITY FOR WEEKS.
YES, BUT AS A RESULT OF THAT PRISON BREAK, THE AVENGERS GOT BACK TOGETHER. STRONGER THAN BEFORE. AND WITH GREATER PURPOSE--
THEIR PURPOSE TURNED OUT TO BE THE ELIMINATION OF ANYONE WHO STOOD IN THEIR WAY...
...INCLUDING BILLY.
WHAT?
BILLY HAD GONE TO LATVERIA TO RESCUE THE SCARLET WITCH. THE AVENGERS KILLED THEM BOTH.
THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED THE ENTIRE TEAM IF I HADN'T SHOWN UP IN TIME.
WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?
TELL ME. PLEASE.
WHY?

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO LIE TO HIM.
PROBABLY NOT. BUT IT HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT.
BESIDES, I KNEW HE'D DO ANYTHING FOR YOU...
...BILLY.
NOW, IRON LAD WILL GO BACK IN TIME AND SET OFF THE CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT TURNS HIM INTO KANG THE CONQUEROR...
...AND DESTROYS THE AVENGERS...
...FOREVER.
TO BE CONTINUED IN AVENGERS: THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE #5, ON SALE NEXT MONTH!